

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 416 111

SO 027 211

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TITLE Democratic Citizenship Education in Albania: A Manual for Educators.  
INSTITUTION Washington Univ., Seattle.  
SPONS AGENCY United States Information Agency, Washington, DC.  
PUB DATE 1996-00-00  
NOTE 77p.  
CONTRACT IA-ASCF-G5190504  
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS Citizenship; \*Citizenship Education; \*Comparative Education; Cross Cultural Studies; \*Democracy; Democratic Values; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Foundations of Education; International Education; Philosophy; Self Determination  
IDENTIFIERS \*Albania

ABSTRACT

This manual traces the emergence of democracy in Albania from the end of the Communist system in 1990. It deals with the concepts and practices of democratic citizenship education and emphasizes the role of education in developing and sustaining democracy. The manual is to assist educators to put together the knowledge and skills they possess with whatever new is presented in the manual in order to educate the citizens of tomorrow for a new and democratic Albania. The three chapters are: (1) "Albania Moves Toward Democracy" describing the first 6 years' achievements and problems and discussing the need for democratic citizenship education; (2) "The Basics of Democracy" defining and tracing "democracy," and discussing the basic values and principles of democracy; and (3) "The Basics of Democratic Citizenship Education" including the curriculum of democratic citizenship education, methods of teaching democratic citizenship education, and teacher education. (EH)

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# **DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN ALBANIA**

## **A Manual for Educators**

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This manual is the product of a project at the University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA, funded by the United States Information Agency of the American Government, Contract Number IA-ASCF-G5190504, Professor Theodore Kaltsounis, Director.  
September 1996

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## Chapter 1

### ALBANIA MOVES TOWARD DEMOCRACY

#### A. The First Six Years: Achievements and Problems

December 1990 was the time when Albania abandoned irrevocably the communist system, both the theoretical concepts and the institutions. At that time, new vistas were opened and new possibilities were created for the Albanian people as individuals as well as a society. Social transformation and economic integration with Western democratic societies became top priorities. The years 1990-1995 constitute the first period during which Albanians experienced democracy. But connecting threads with the most recent past are still evident in the behavior of individuals as well as groups. This is a very important reality to be recognized by the teachers, because, if not, they will not be able to develop a clear vision of democracy and its parameters. Changes and the conflicts and vacuums they generate make it difficult for teachers to know how to educate for democracy.

Thus far, Albania has painted only the first strokes of her portrait as a democratic society. Many details are still in need of definition and refinement before Albania can develop into a true

democracy. Some of the changes were significant. A new educational system has already been legislated. This new system promises to have a new mission, a different structure, a new curriculum, and more humane relationship between the students and the teacher.

In addition to changes in education, other existing social institutions were reformed, and new ones were created. New legislation made possible the free and normal functioning of the institution of religion, which was strictly prohibited since 1967. The institution of family was liberated from some taboos which had the tendency to preserve the traditional norms of relations between its members. The mass media became free. This new framework of operation of the media, along with the new form of education, provided fresh opportunities for the individuals to develop their own perspective and outlook in life.

Albanian society left behind the communist social structure of a cooperativist peasantry and working class, and is witnessing its substitution with a new social structure. Though still not firmly consolidated, the elements of the new structure consist of business people, farmers and traders. As these people pursue their interests, they are enriching the Albanian society. Also enriching the society are the possibilities for a free and equal development of various subcultures and ethnic groups.

The rights of minorities and ethnic groups to pursue an education and to use their own mother tongue were legalized. This change enabled the minorities to educate themselves in their own language at all levels, something which contributes toward their

development and eventually toward the integration of the different European cultures.

The present Albanian society recognizes social diversity and makes possible the cultivation of political opposition. Both of these changes require free thinking. The laws concerning the press and political parties allow and protect the freedom of individuals and groups to express their views. These laws should serve as models for the institution of school. Teachers have the responsibility to allow students to accept and practice free thinking, regardless of the difficulties this may create initially.

The institutions and organizations that propagate and support fundamental human rights are still under development in Albania. The country has a package of laws and a number of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that promote and support the human rights of the individual. The Center for Human Rights Education and the Albanian Committee of Helsinki are currently functioning and actively involved in Albania, the former in the field of human rights education and the latter in the field of defending human rights and freedom. Unlike during the past when various forms of social organization (youth, women, etc.) were dictated by the state, today each individual is free to be a member of whatever group in society he/she chooses. In this way, each individual is free to choose on the basis of what is in agreement with his/her own dispositions and personality, and to control the development of certain values. At the same time, each individual is responsible for whatever role he/she plays in society. The creation of different associations and clubs, each one with their own orientations, such as

sports, religious groups, and others, is a testimony to the right of free choice.

The years 1990-1996 favored free movement of populations within and outside Albanian territory. People were free to move from rural areas toward urban zones, as well as from Albania toward different European countries. This had an impact not only in the economic domain, but in the cultural domain as well. It made it possible for cultural differences and cultural diversity to be enhanced.

## B. The Need for Democratic Citizenship Education

An effort was made to show some of the changes the Albanian society has undergone during the period of 1990-1996. Though these changes have not yet been fully realized, they created new possibilities for each individual, and they changed significantly the mission of the school.

If the changes are to reach their potential, the school must assume the responsibility and demonstrate the commitment to do its part. The first step would be for educators to become familiar with the present stage of development of the country and to be able to visualize its future. They need also to have a clear understanding of the institution they serve and their role within the context of that institution's mission. The educators need to recognize, however, that the realization of these objectives depends entirely on the grasp they have of the role of the individual in a democratic society, and his/her

rights, responsibilities and duties. After all, the rights of the individual and his/her relationships with society are what they are ultimately called upon to promote through education, and this is the meaning of democratic citizenship education.

The emphasis on democratic citizenship education on the part of the school is justified for a number of reasons. The school is an institution that works with heterogeneous groups of individuals as far as the economic, religious, ethnic and cultural background, and style of learning are concerned. It is probably unique in its ability to provide all with equal opportunities.

The school, with its classes, groups, clubs, and other associations, is in a position to provide for a social environment that resembles the larger society, but is more stable and secure. Students are able within it to pursue their inclinations and interests, and success is more probable. Within this environment students learn values and how to be civil with each other.

School is the institution that makes use of experts. The pedagogical expertise of the teachers, their professional skills, their cultural development, and their role as citizens in the broader society are strong reassurances for the success of democratic citizenship education.

The school makes use of a curriculum, which in addition to the acquisition of knowledge aims at skill development, including participatory skills necessary for involvement in the affairs of society.

School is a deliberate institution. As such it must compensate for whatever deficit the family and other institutions present as far

as citizenship education is concerned. Because of the different cultural and educational levels, families and other institutions cannot be relied upon to supply children with adequate learning opportunities to become good citizens.

School is the institution that uses proven and successful methods and strategies in order to achieve its objectives. It makes sure each student learns to the extent his/her potential allows.

### C. The Purpose of this Manual

This manual deals with the concepts and practices of democratic citizenship education. It is addressed not only to teachers of civic education, whose work has a direct impact on the development of our democratic society, but to all teachers and others who are somehow involved with the education of children and youth. They all need to know as much as possible about the definition of democracy, the democratic values and the way they develop, the life skills important in a democratic society, the democratic institutions and the way they function, the human rights, the duties and responsibilities of the citizen, the limits of power in a democracy, and the non-governmental institutions and their role in a democratic society.

The topics listed above constitute the basics of democracy, but the primary objective of this manual is to emphasize the role of education in developing and sustaining democracy. There can be no democracy without an appropriate and adequate education, an

education that is open and respectful of reasoning and the rules of scholarship. Hopefully, this manual will assist educators to put together the knowledge and skills they possess with whatever new is presented here in order to be able to educate the citizens of tomorrow for a new and democratic Albania.

## Chapter 2

### THE BASICS OF DEMOCRACY

#### A. Definition of democracy

One often hears the words *freedom* and *democracy* around the globe. These two words reflect the aspirations of many people and point to the age-old human dream strongly recorded in peoples' beliefs and actions. Democracy implies a social system, while freedom is a necessary condition within that system.

Human history is full of efforts for democracy and a better life. These efforts were among themselves different in nature, and had different dimensions. Some were successful, others were unsuccessful, but all of them were considered worthwhile because they were undertaken for the cause of democracy.

The dream of democracy is a dream for freedom of the mind and soul. That is why a struggle for freedom has always been a noble undertaking. However, not all societies were able to achieve democracy at the same time. Because of unfavorable circumstances at times, and certain bad choices on the part of those in power, democracy was slow to come in some societies, including Albania. But people never stopped dreaming for democracy, quite often motivated and inspired by the experience of those living in advanced

democracies in other parts of the world. During our time, nations that were slow to develop democracy liked to use as models and to learn from the practices of the Western democracies.

Human society experimented and implemented different forms and models of democracy, starting with the old forms of democracy in ancient times till the more recent democracies of modern times. In view of these different forms and models, one may ask: What is democracy? Is there a firm definition of it?

In theory, yes, but not in practice, and this is due to varied prevailing circumstances. Few societies approach the ideal form of democracy to a respectable degree. It is difficult to guarantee the success of a democracy in practice. It happens so because while the idea of democracy is stable, its process of development is highly uncertain. Democracies fail not because people do not know the definition of democracy, but because people lack the appropriate skills for implementing democracy. It is not enough for a society to just dream about democracy and develop a strong desire for it.

Usually the individual has a desire to be free and to live in a free social environment. Such an environment, however, cannot be assumed. The individual, along with others in his/her community, needs to cultivate and develop it for his/her own benefit and for the benefit of everyone else in the community. But in order to participate in the cultivation of a free democratic environment, one must be skillful in democratic practices such as tolerance and the abilities to develop understandings and reach conclusions. Only through the application of such skills can freedom be made possible.

Can democracy be guaranteed to a certain society only through legislation? The answer is no. It is so because society is governed by its written as well as its unwritten laws -- the moral codes the people learned to abide by throughout the years. It is so because society is governed by governmental as well as nongovernmental organizations originated and supported by the people. Mainly, it is the civil behavior of the people exhibited in the process of resolving differences that is the essence of democracy.

Reference was made to the importance of a number of skills in developing and sustaining democracy, but skills are not enough. People must also hold and practice a common core of values. The most important of these values is freedom. Freedom is the foundation of democracy, because a democratic system is impossible without the freedom of the individual and groups to express themselves and interact with each other. In the final analysis, democracy is not simply a system of ideas, but a system of practices supported by freedom. In short, democracy is the institutionalization of freedom.

Democracy as the institutionalization of freedom is one of the accepted definitions of democracy, but there are others. Some will say that democracy is a process, rather than a fixed ideology. Ideologies usually dictate the goals as well as the methods for achieving those goals. Democracies are more open-ended. The people define the goals as well as the methodologies within a social context that is characterized by freedom and respect for the individual. It is for this reason that democracies in different times and spaces bear the social, cultural, economic, and religious

characteristics of the societies in which they exist, but they all respect the freedom of the individual.

Quite often democracy is defined in political and economic terms. People form political organizations in order to engage in public competitions regarding various alternatives of economic development. Democracy has also been defined as a government based on the consent of the governed and equality of opportunity. Others look at democracy from a judicial point of view and define it as "law in action." Still others view it as the art of compromise. Lincoln defines democracy as a form of government that comes from people, belongs to the people, and serves the people.

As demonstrated, democracy is defined in a number of ways. It is not a rigidly prescribed system. Democracy is what the people of a particular society make it as they deal with their differences civilly in a context of freedom.

## B. Democracy and Education

One of the main concerns of a democratic society is to sustain and even improve itself as it moves into the future. Democracy implies an endless process of improvements in social conditions, and its future depends on progress made in this direction. But what is the one thing that can guarantee the future of democracy more than anything else? Is it free elections? Is it the training of a handful of elite managers? Is it provision for fundamental human rights? Is it

the continuous loyalty demonstrated by the people to democratic ideals?

All of the above are important, but they cannot fully guarantee the future of democracy. It is not enough to just have individuals go to the polling booth during election day, while the rest of the time they are indifferent and apathetic. Politicians and public officials are important but not when they just promise a lot and deliver nothing. A handful of elite claiming that only they know how to manage the problems of society today and in the future may at times be self-serving and misleading. There is a difference between legally instituting human rights and actually practicing them. If loyalty is to be enduring and productive, it needs to be founded on reason and understanding. What then is the key to democracy?

It was implied earlier that democracy is the business of the people -- all the people in a particular society. As it was already stated, in a democracy the power rests with the people. The government springs from the people, belongs to the people, and is supposed to serve the people. But in order for the people to be able to effectively exercise their power they must have a good education. To repeat again, democracy without education cannot exist. But what kind of education is appropriate?

Democratic citizenship education addresses all three domains of teaching and learning: knowledge, values, and skills, including the skills of participation in the affairs of society. It is important that all children and youth have the opportunity to develop their potential. In a democratic society, it is critical to educate all people to the

extent possible, instead of concentrating on the few who excel and leaving all others behind.

Democracy expects certain behaviors on the part of every citizen, and these behaviors cannot develop by chance. The development of these behaviors is influenced by many factors, and needs to be carried out in a systematic way. That is the business of the school. Other social institutions can assist in this process, but they present limitations. The school and the educational system in general make sure that all people meet educational standards and objectives.

Considered by society as the most reliable institution to prepare those who tomorrow will sustain democracy, the school has the responsibility to develop in young people the conviction that democracy allows for the most humane form of government, and that its future depends on the vision the young generations have about freedom, equality, and justice. At the same time, the school can be relied upon to develop societal values rationally and for the benefit of not only the individual, but the community as well. In this sense, the institution of school is the cradle where the dream of a better tomorrow is nourished, where human courage sharpens its edge.

Furthermore, the school gives the opportunity to each child to develop his/her own mind by enhancing his/her critical thinking abilities and his/her judgment so that he/she is able to discover ambiguity, contradictions, wrong application of principles, reliability of facts, unfair judgment, limitations of assumptions, and the like. The school should provide the opportunity to each child to experiment with his/her ideas and to have the courage to dare to

apply this knowledge for his/her own good and the good of the community. The school should also teach young people the meaning of life and how to set standards and objectives for themselves. In other words, the school should teach young people the theory of the democratic process, but also the skills and values to make democracy work.

### C. Democracy in the Course of History

The first model of democracy was implemented in Athens between the sixth and fifth centuries BC. It consisted of an *assembly*, a political body that included 5000-6000 members. A member of this assembly could be any adult male citizen of Athens. Women, slaves, and foreigners were denied membership. The members of this assembly were elected. In addition to the assembly, there was a court comprised of 501 members.

The *Magna Carta* was the second station in the development of democracy. It is the document of demands signed by inhabitants of England and sent to their king in 1215. This document is considered the cornerstone for the establishment of the constitutional regime that followed. The document comprised 63 articles confirming a list of fundamental rights for the people. The list became the foundation for human rights in English society. The *Magna Carta* declared that the king could not make decisions on such matters as taxes without the consent of the people. This brought about the creation of

representative bodies to advise the king. It also gave birth to the court system.

The ideas of John Locke, appearing in two publications in 1690, constitute the third stage of democratic development. Locke stressed the necessity to respect the laws of nature in society. Laws of nature, Locke argued, must guarantee the fundamental human rights, such as the right of life, the right of property, and the right to enjoy the fruits of one's work.

Locke's ideas, and later Rousseau's, were widely reflected in the two Declarations on Human Rights proclaimed in 1789, the first in France on August 26 and the second in America on September 25. These two declarations formed the basis for the human rights included in the Polish Constitution on May 3, 1791.

More recently democracy prevailed over the colonial system and totalitarian communism. Former colonies everywhere have instituted democratic systems, or they are rapidly moving in that direction. The former Soviet Union and most countries under the communist influence, including Albania, are feverishly striving to establish their democratic institutions. There are difficulties, but peoples' hopes for a better life rest with the success of the democratic movement.

Based on history, it can be said that democracy is not something that has developed in a linear manner. Democracy's development is very much like the sea wave that moves forward and then steps back. Our function as educators is to make sure it keeps moving forward.

## D. The Basic Principles of Democracy

Democracy is not just a system of abstract ideas related to freedom. It is also an institutionalized system of practices that make freedom real within the context of human rights and the quality of citizens before the law. Democracy and democratic practices are guided by a number of basic principles. The presence or absence of these principles usually determine whether a particular society is or is not a democracy and to what extent. The major democratic principles are majority rule with protection of the minority, the consent of the governed, limited government, open society, human dignity and the sanctity of the individual, and the sovereignty of law and due process. Each one is briefly described below.

### 1. Majority rule with protection for the minority.

Most decisions in a democracy are finalized through voting whereby the majority prevails. But this does not mean that minority groups are ignored. Their rights are protected, including the right to peacefully promote their positions in order to gain more support for them. Majorities cannot be abusive toward minorities just because they can produce more votes. The rights of all citizens are protected by a constitution, which constitutes the supreme law of society.

### 2. The consent of the governed.

The people hold the supreme power in any democracy. They establish the government and they have the right to limit its powers.

Governments cannot exist without the consent of the people. Furthermore, governments exist for the purpose of protecting the rights of the people, including the natural rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In order for the people to be able to exercise their power, they must have the freedom to form political parties and have fair and free elections.

### 3. Limited government.

Governments can become powerful to the point where they can threaten the rights of the individual. That is why democracies have prescribed ways in their constitutions with which they limit the power of the government. This is done usually by means of separation of powers, checks and balances, and the enactment of new laws. Separation of powers means that there are three separate branches of government independent from each other -- the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary. The first makes the laws, and the second implements them. The determination whether a law is consistent with the constitution, or whether the executive branch of the government oversteps its authority, is in the hands of the judiciary.

### 4. Open society.

This principle implies that the individual is free to believe whatever he/she wishes, to embrace any religious doctrine, to join any organization, to engage in a free and open debate, to express his/her own opinion, and to raise any question. Openness also means

that the government has an obligation to report to the people about its activities.

#### 5. Human dignity and the sanctity of the individual.

In a democratic society, unlike the communist society, the individual is supreme. It is the individual, and not the state, that is the central focus of the system. The individual is considered to be sacred and must be respected at all times, even when under suspicion that he/she committed a crime. Those who are proven to have committed a crime must be punished only according to the law. The sanctity of the individual also means respect for his/her privacy. This implies non-intervention on the part of the government in the individual's private affairs, unless the law permits it.

#### 6. Sovereignty of the law and due process.

None is above the law in a democracy. Equality before the law constitutes the core of a true democratic society. The right to due process demands justice and impartiality in civil and criminal procedures. The state must see to it that there is no room for injustice. Citizens must be treated equally regardless of their ethnic background, religious affiliation, or political orientation. All citizens must enjoy the right of equal protection before the law.

## E. Basic Values of Democracy

No society can exist without some common values. These values constitute the basic moral norms of society and the individuals in that society. It is the duty of all citizens to go beyond the acquisition of sufficient knowledge about society and its social institutions, and to commit themselves to the development of the basic values of democracy, often referred to as civic values. Otherwise, it will not be possible to achieve and sustain a democratic system. The development of civic values is not a task only for the school and its teachers. Other social institutions such as the family, religion, media, the government, and the various economic institutions do play a part.

In the communist past, values were thought of as absolute, and the members of society never discussed them. Methods utilized to transmit them from one generation to the next could not be distinguished from indoctrination. The ends justified the means to the point where biased views and distorted information about ideas and events were used.

In democratic societies, on the other hand, it is generally accepted that the development of values cannot be achieved through force. In order to instill values, it is important to do it through the rational process. One can see, then, the lasting effects of the values. Values endure because they have been tested through logic. They become inner forces which influence the behavior of the individual. The best approach to the teaching of values is to introduce them within the context of the study of social problems. This way, the

individual is given the opportunity to evaluate his/her own values and test them as to whether they are good or bad based on his/her interests, fairness to others, and the promotion of the good of society.

There are personal and social values. Personal values are those which each individual chooses to develop, such as religious values, food preferences, and the like. One is free, for example, to be a Catholic, a Muslim, or an Orthodox in a democratic society. On the other hand, social values are introduced as standards for a certain society and are developed through a consensus of all who live in that society.

Presently, there are seven values which are considered by authorities in the developed democracies to be the core of democratic values. They are: the individual or human rights, the common good, justice, equality of opportunity, diversity, truth, and patriotism. A brief description of each follows.

### 1. Human rights of each individual

These include the right to live, to own property, to pursue happiness, and to be free. As already mentioned, all of these are referred to as the natural rights. The right to be free implies freedom of speech and expression, freedom of religion and conscience, and freedom of assembly. In addition to these rights, citizens in a democratic society enjoy a number of civil rights such as due process and equality before the law. It is the responsibility of the government to protect the rights of the individual.

### 2. Common good

Democracy demands that the common good be in the forefront, along with individual rights. This has been the essence of the social thinking even during the classical period, especially among the Greeks. The individual cannot possibly enjoy his/her human rights without a healthy social context. The common good asks individuals to commit themselves to a resolution of the problems of the community. It is their obligation to work with the others for the benefit of the entire society.

Attention to the common good can secure stability and even the existence of the political community itself. In order to facilitate the promotion of the common good, it is necessary that those in authority make serious and continuous efforts to properly educate the citizens to be active participants.

### 3. Justice

The basic idea of justice is to be fair. Justice must be applied in all social contacts, and must be present at all age levels. We all desire and need justice. The idea of justice, or fairness, is a good criterion to be used in the study of the various democratic values as they apply to school and other social institutions. One should always ask, is a particular value fair to all?

Justice should prevail in all social activities, from the adoption of laws that are fair and reasonable to the decisions of the courts, which should be fair to all individuals concerned.

It is important to think of justice as the essence of a democratic society, or as it is often called, "the first virtue of social institutions." Justice must dominate people's behavior in their relationships with

one another. Each individual in a diverse community has the right to be different and pursue his/her own goals to the extent possible, for as long as it is done in a just manner.

The forced equality of the old totalitarian state was nothing but a corrupt form of the principle of justice. The new democratic order, with its characteristic political and economic structures, guarantees the development and of each individual to the extent possible, while at the same time condemns discrimination on the basis of race, sex, language, ethnic origin and political and social convictions.

#### 4. Equality

The principle of justice demands that each individual has the right to enjoy equal opportunity in the pursuit of happiness and the other natural rights. It should be remembered, however, that no one should pursue his/her happiness to the point where it causes equal opportunity to others to be denied. As a matter of fact, in a democracy the government has the authority to intervene in order to protect everyone's right to equal opportunity.

It is stressed again that equality and equal opportunity do not mean forced imposition of equality of conditions and incomes, as the goal of many extreme egalitarian communities and communist regimes has been. Conformity and forced uniformity imposed by totalitarian governments proved to be a corrupt form of equality.

#### 5. Diversity

In a democratic society diversity is recognized as always present and is highly valued. A diverse society consists of people

with a variety of social, racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. Most, if not all countries in the world, including those which choose to deny it, are characterized by significant social, ethnic, religious, racial, economic, and political differences. In a democratic society, acceptance of diversity is considered not only desirable, but beneficial, as well.

Differences among various social groups properly viewed tend to enhance the quality of a particular society. When respected, all groups in a society can contribute toward the cultural and intellectual richness of that society. At the same time, however, all citizens of a society have the obligation to balance their concept of diversity with the need for a degree of unity. When people live together, they must demonstrate a commitment to a core of unifying values that will assist them to achieve and maintain social and political cohesion and a common identity. In a democratic society, all are invited to unify while still maintaining their differences. They are invited to create a stable pluralistic democratic society.

## 6. Truth

Truth is also one of the basic values of democracy. Truth builds trust among people and is especially critical in the relationships between the government and the people. If a government wishes to be trusted by the people it is supposed to serve, it must always be open and truthful. Unfortunately, communist societies were closed societies, and truth was too often sacrificed. A government which lies to its people cannot expect the

loyalty of its citizens, and will not be able to preserve its legitimate authority for very long.

At times, there might be compelling reasons for the government to withhold the truth from the people. This can be justified only on rare occasions and under predetermined procedures in order to prevent the possibility of abuse by any one individual or group in government.

## 7. Patriotism

Patriotism is perhaps one of the most difficult civic values to be defined. Usually, patriotism implies love of country, pride for it, and readiness to sacrifice in order to defend its interests. In the democratic sense, patriotism manifests itself in the form of a sense of obligation to participate in social affairs and be responsible for the vitality of the democratic nature of society. In a democracy, patriotic citizens do not blindly support their country, good or bad, but they see to it that the fundamental democratic principles and values are practiced to the fullest extent. Patriotism is a positive force and the patriotic sentiments play a dynamic role in the life of a democratic society.

Quite often in the past, patriotism advocated total victory at great sacrifices and at the expense of all others. That is not patriotism; it is nationalistic chauvinism, which is a corrupt form of patriotism. The democratic form of patriotism calls for dialogue and reasonable compromises so that all countries and all people can live together in peace and be able to prosper.

In addition to the above basic core of democratic values, there are other values which are just as important in a democracy. They include responsibility, participation, privacy, and respect for people and property. Authority is also valued, but it must be an authority that derives from and is controlled by the people. Some of these values were evident in the section that dealt with the basic principles of democracy. Values enhancing the unity of a society are often known as **unum** values, while those enhancing individualism and the pluralistic elements of society are called **pluribus** values.

Except for human rights and the power of the people as the ultimate authority, values can change in a democracy. This can be done through the consensus of the people, arrived at through peaceful and rational dialogue within a context of freedom and respect for each other.

#### F. Basic Democratic Skills

Skills are formed by means of repeated actions carried out by the individual. There are all kinds of skills. Democratic citizenship is concerned mainly with the social skills, which are fundamental for implementing the democratic process. The skills basic to the functions of a democracy include the ability to dialogue, express convictions, make compromises, adjust to new social situations, evaluate actions and situations on the basis of the contribution to the common good, make rational decisions, resolve conflicts, and solve social problems. In addition, it is important for citizens in a

particular society to have the capacity to collaborate with each other in the identification of significant social problems and in finding solutions to these problems.

The ability to engage in a rational dialogue is probably the most basic democratic skill. As citizens with diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and interests, people in a democracy are always searching for common ground. Many decisions are involved in this process and rational dialogue is the key to making these decisions. In order for the dialogue to work, free interaction and communication among individuals and groups is imperative. Communication extends beyond stating individual positions. It involves debate in which participants listen to each other as they consider different solutions to problems, and compromise. It is clear that dialogue serves as an important element in the functioning of democracy, and it must not be considered occasionally.

The solution of problems creates new situations to which people have to adjust. These adjustments demand new practices and new skills. Dialogue, adjustments to new situations, and the development of new practices are endless endeavors, and make the business of democracy a never-ending proposition. As some conflicts are resolved, new ones emerge.

A democratic society needs citizens who must be aware of the presence of conflict and contradictions. In every society there are competitive interests, different opinions, distinct classes, rival groups, and different views about social priorities or the interpretations of the various democratic rights. It is not clear whether this or that individual or group has the right answer to a

particular question or problem that is brought put for discussion or solution. Within this context, it is important that citizens must be willing to compromise. Individuals and groups must demonstrate their good will by recognizing the differences among themselves, tolerating each other, and softening their positions. By means of debate and compromise parties can come to a consensus that would benefit all those concerned.

Attempts to reconcile differences at the individual and small group level will have an impact on the political life of a society, which is usually characterized by conflict and opposing ideas. Since compromise and consensus by individuals or groups are judged in a democracy to be acceptable forms of behavior, it is hoped that these behaviors will also become acceptable in the political life of a country.

Democracy starts in everyday social life. If people learn how to compromise in the private sphere, they will also be successful in doing similarly in the political and public life of society.

Democracy is an arena where ideas, individuals, and institutions confront each other. By means of interaction, tolerance, dialogue, compromise, and consensus, conflicts can be resolved and the potential for a better future becomes evident.

## G. Social Groups and Institutions

Quite often teachers discuss with their students what society is, how people group together, why they need to relate with each other, and why it is necessary for them to work together to resolve the various problems they face. The most frequent form of people gathering is the group. Groups may be of different nature depending on the common interests that bring together a number of individuals. The common interests may be economic, social, cultural, religious, sports related, political, or any other type. Interests that make people come together in a group are infinite. People may also group according to age, profession, ethnicity, and gender. Some groups are more formal than others. The more formal groups are often referred to as institutions.

Becoming a member of a group is not a random process. In order to do so, one must accept the rules of the group, be accepted by the members of the group, be friendly and sociable, and be trustworthy, including keeping the secrets of the group.

What does a group have to offer to the individual? A group is an environment with which the individual is satisfied, and in which he/she develops a sense of belonging, widens his interests, and is given the opportunity to better know his own abilities and interests. In other words, a group is the social microenvironment within which each individual finds security and is able to grow to his/her own potential.

Just about everyone belongs to a number of groups at the same time, sometimes very different from each other. For instance, one

may be a member of the staff where he/she works, a family, a religious community, and probably several others. Being a member of a group means that one plays a certain social role. In work, one plays the role of the staff member and he/she is expected to fulfill certain duties on time. In a professional association, one carries out all the tasks the association expects one to fulfill. One must take seriously the tasks assigned to him/her by the political group to which he/she belongs. The same is true in the case of the family. The sum total of all these roles and the way one carries them out, makes up the identity of that individual. Belonging to various groups and learning to play the various expected roles assists one in what is called the process of socialization.

Which are the most important social institutions? What role do they play in the lives of the people and in society in general? The main social institutions are: the family, the school, religion, mass media, government, and the economy. Each of these has its own peculiarities, but they all have one thing in common. Their mission is to serve the individual while at the same time promoting the common good as defined by the people through consensus.

### 1. The Family

Family is the basis of any society. Rich or poor, rural or urban, child or adult, the family is the basic cell that develops and cultivates the basic feelings, values, responsibilities, and commitments for any individual. Family is the source for anyone's basic characteristics. It is from the family that one gets race, religion, ethnicity, language, customs, and most other ways of life. Family provides food, shelter,

warmth, security, and leadership. To a nation, the family provides its future. It can be argued that a nation is as strong as the family is. In a broader sense, family is a kind of a community. Members of the family cooperate and assist each other just like people in a neighborhood, a profession, or in the larger community are expected to cooperate and assist each other.

The family supplies affection and punishment and provides enormous opportunities for learning. It often happens that family members learn from each other through disagreements. It is there that they learn, for example, how to compromise. Family strengthens the abilities of its individual members to carry out tasks and fulfill responsibilities. It is there that people learn how to be friendly, patient, and honest. The skills and values developed in family are necessary for living outside family as well. This means that society, in most cases, is guided by the same values and principles that the family is. For example, the rules of the community usually reflect the rules of the family. Society, which is really a union of families, simply institutionalizes most of the rules, values, and skills practiced by the family.

## 2. Religion

Regardless of whether one today believes in some religion, the fact is that an overwhelming majority of our ancestors and many of our parents belonged to a particular religious community. Within one and the same society, people are usually grouped to a number of religious communities. Within each one of these communities, individuals cultivate values, customs and rituals in accordance with

the moral code of that community. The institution of religion consists of religious leaders, religious literature (sacred and holy scriptures), various traditions, and the believers.

What does religion provide to the individual? People feel that they find spiritual comfort in religion, especially in times of despair or loss. Religion assists people to explain the meaning of life and death. Religion supplies people with a sense of belonging to a community, helping them to believe that they are living a normal life. Membership in a religious community enables people to share everyday experiences with others. Each religion provides its followers with a moral code by advocating such basic principles as: do not do to others what you would not like others to do to you, do not kill, do not steal, and many others. Like other institutions, religion is practiced in communities that have their own rules. The rules of a community serve as the bases for defining the rights and responsibilities of all members. They also define what is acceptable everyday behavior. Many of the community norms and rules have their roots in the religious institutions. For example, members of religious communities usually give assistance to families in need. They do not have to do this, but by doing so they express their humanity, and derive satisfaction for obeying one of their moral rules. They call this charity, and it represents one of the values cultivated by their religion. Charity is voluntary, and it is a value that is transmitted from generation to generation because of concern for other people. In a democracy, individuals and governments show the same concern. They assist families in need or in case of emergency. In a sense, the institution of government, as well as

society in general, borrows norms and rules from the institution of religion in order to compile its own norms and rules.

In summary, religion helps people cultivate three main values that can be useful in a democratic society. They are: *bamiresine*, or support for others in case of misfortune, *loyalty* to the societal moral norms, and *empathy* which leads to love for all human beings.

### 3. Education

It was pointed out earlier that a democracy cannot survive without education. Education empowers people by providing them with the knowledge, values, and skills they need to exercise their responsibilities as productive citizens. Initially education was done informally by the family and the immediate community. This was not enough, however, and formal education emerged. Formal education takes place in schools.

Schools help young people to find their way and become useful to society. It develops their inborn abilities to their potential. School makes it possible for a better future for each and every individual as well as the society. More specifically, the school's primary function is to develop knowledgeable, thoughtful, and caring citizens. At the same time, the school helps young people to specialize in different fields of knowledge and practice so that they can eventually develop into professionals useful to society. The school has a formal curriculum in order to be able to achieve its predetermined objectives, including the development in young people of the ability to express their opinions.

The institution of school has its own distinct characteristics, just like the institutions of religion and family. School gathers children and youth that come from different social, cultural, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. As a result, conflicts are possible within the classroom community. It is necessary, therefore, for the school to develop a number of rules to be used as the basis for the conduct of school and classroom life. How these rules are developed, however, makes a difference. They are more effective when the students themselves are involved in their development. It is obvious that by involving the students in the development of the rules, the school goes beyond knowledge and intellectual skills and contributes toward the development of citizenship qualities.

As someone was about to receive his graduation certificate, he was asked how he felt. He replied: "School provided me with a certificate, helped me to find a better job, to develop some skills and values, and to live a better private life, but above all the school equipped me with the ability to change myself, others, and society." That reply contains the essence of education in a democracy.

#### 4. Government

The institution of government is an instrument of the people instituted by them to protect their rights, and to assist them with problems that emerge as they live together in a free democratic society. Government, for example, maintains law and order, provides public services and facilitates the functioning of various institutions. In a democratic society, government is elected, monitored, and controlled by the people. Many countries in the world have adopted

the democratic form of government, especially during the latter part of this century.

During ancient times, when democratic governments were first instituted, all people were directly involved in the business of government. Today, people are involved indirectly by giving their consent to the government and by electing representatives who stay close to them and who consider their wishes and ambitions in whatever decisions they make. It must be emphasized here that the individuals in government are there not to pursue their own interests or the interests of any one particular group. They are there to serve society.

As Albanian citizens, it is significant for us to realize that the mentality about government and those who serve in it has changed. Government no longer serves the interests of those in government at the expense of the individual and the society as a whole. As it was already pointed out, a democratic government is in the service of all citizens and protects the freedom of the individual and all other human rights. The powers of the government are limited. Separation of powers into legislative, executive, and judicial is the way in which this is done. Each of these three branches can take actions independently and can exercise control over the powers of the other two. In most cases the legislative branch makes the laws, while the executive branch carries them out. The judiciary makes sure the laws do not violate the Constitution and they are carried out in a fair way.

To establish a true democratic government with the aim of fulfilling the dreams of the citizens, a simple moral philosophy must

prevail: the citizen as a human being must be the top priority of the government. The state exists for the individual and not the individual for the state, as was the case in the past. This is a necessary condition for the government to be democratic. A government cannot be democratic by name alone. It must prove its democratic nature through its actions. Here lies the deep gap between a truly democratic government and the government which the Albanian society experienced for a long time during the totalitarian communist regime.

### 5. The economy

While we talk about citizenship and civic education, it is important to briefly discuss the role of the economy and the economic institutions in a democratic society. In a democracy, all citizens are expected to participate in the economic life of society, but within a context in which freedom prevails. Economy refers to those activities which have to do with production, distribution, and exchange of goods and services among the people. People are free to engage in whatever businesses they wish in order to facilitate the production, distribution and exchange of goods and services. What business one enters depends on what the market needs. That is why democratic economic systems are often referred to as market economies. The motive is profit.

In a democratic society, economic freedom, or free initiative, constitutes a basic element if the system is to be effective. Economic freedom is manifested in six different areas: freedom to produce whatever one feels is needed in the market, freedom to buy and sell,

freedom to compete, freedom to secure profit, freedom to own property, and freedom to choose a job.

Since the Albanian society already adopted the market economy and the free initiative that goes with it, it is necessary for young people to understand how it works. They should learn how the economy influences their everyday lives, what the position of citizens is as producers and consumers, what effects their behaviors have on themselves and the economy, and what they can do to advance their economic potential and that of society. Economy covers many aspects of the individual's personal and social life.

As it can be seen, the economic institutions are organized to satisfy the needs of the people. The needs, on the other hand, reflect the wishes of the people. Through this process, the economy in a democratic society reflects certain values such as freedom, participation, and others, which should be respected. One can conclude that the economy in a democratic society is characterized by private initiative and a free market.

## 6. Mass Media

Mass media play a significant part in the formation of people's values and behaviors. Political debate thrives in the current Albanian democratic society, while freedom of press and free expression of thought are a reality. It is natural to think that in an open democratic society, television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and other sources of information play an active role in the continuous political debate and in social life in general.

Overall, mass media carry out the following functions:

a. They provide information on all sides of the various issues.

People are constantly in search of quick, true, and objective information. The opinions of people on issues are different, while the alternative solutions on various social, political, and economic problems vary. To clarify the enormous number of opinions and to sort out the alternatives, people have to rely on the information provided by radio, television, and the other means of communication. This becomes very evident, for example, during elections. In a democracy, it is important that no information is withheld from the public.

b. Information presented to the public must be characterized by impartiality and lack of bias. The media are free to select the major issues and problems to be presented to the public. In a democratic society, however, the various media organizations consider data and facts related to these issues and problems, not according to their wishes, preferences, or inclinations, but on the basis of what is relevant. This is a very important responsibility on the part of the media if they are to contribute to the development of well-informed citizens and toward the promotion of the common good. It is the civic responsibility of the mass media to help individuals differentiate between distorted or outright false information and the truth. Demand for telling the truth, objectivity, and impartiality becomes one of the major goals of democracy.

c. Mass media play an active role in monitoring the activities of the government and all the organizations associated with it. They have the right to raise questions about the actions of those in government, and must feel responsible for uncovering the truth.

Thus, the citizen keeps an eye on the government and determines the extent to which it fulfills its promises. Mass media also communicate the thoughts and opinions expressed by the public concerning the activities of the government and other institutions and non-governmental organizations. Again, it is the responsibility of the mass media to be as comprehensive and fair as possible in their effort to inform the public.

## Chapter 3

### THE BASICS OF DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

#### A. Basic Principles of Democratic Citizenship Education

Quite often, teachers feel the need to refer to widely accepted pedagogical generalizations. They do so because they believe they can deduce from them ideas which can help them to make various diagnoses, develop curriculum, and solve all kinds of problems at school. This is also true when it comes to teaching civics and democratic citizenship education in general.

Some widely accepted principles of effective teaching for achieving the objectives of democratic citizenship education have been recommended by the well-known American education scholar, Jere Brophy of Michigan State University. They are as follows:

##### 1. Effective teaching is meaningful

Citizenship education is and should be always meaningful to all children in the classroom. Through it, the students get powerful, important, inspiring, valuable ideas, and understand why social phenomena keep changing. Through it they understand the basic concepts related to democracy and the democratic process.

## 2. Effective teaching is integrative

Democratic citizenship education is and should be taught integratively. It should address the totality of the individual. It represents the integration of knowledge, skills and values, of in-school and out-of-school environment, of history and geography, of moral and ethics, of personal and common core values. These are all taught integratively.

## 3. Teaching in democratic citizenship education is value-based

It is not sufficient to teach knowledge and skills alone. Values should be brought to focus. It is through this process that children realize that they as individuals and the society at large have interests in common, that they are part of the society and as such they have a part to play in its civil life.

## 4. Effective teaching is challenging to students

Democratic citizenship education is and should be challenging. Ideas brought to class must challenge students' ideas despite their age group; methods of teaching should be far from routine. The teacher has to create a cooperative community of learning, rely strongly on children's abilities and expectations, work together with them, and lead them to get the new ideas and to discover and justify an argument or solution.

## 5. Effective teaching and learning is active

Citizenship education is and should be based on active teaching and learning. Teachers of democratic citizenship are not simply

curriculum technicians. Mechanical learning and teaching are too obsolete for the far reaching and daring objectives of democratic citizenship education. Verbal and rote learning must make way for active learning. Teachers have to give students the chance to stop and think, to bring new challenging ideas to the classroom through discussions, project actions, conflict resolution and decision making experiences.

#### **6. Effective teaching involves reflection and participation**

Democratic citizenship education involves reflective thinking process, democratic participation, and decision making. These three components feed each other and make possible the realization of each other. They help linking the classroom lesson with the wider community.

### **B. The Objectives of Democratic Citizenship Education**

The national goals of education are usually the source from which the objectives for each school subject derive. Like any society, Albania has its own educational goals reflecting the traditions and the dreams for the future of the Albanian people. These goals are found in the pre-university education law of June 1995, article 1, which states, "The mission of the school is spiritual emancipation, the material progress, and the social development of the individual." In article 23, where the goals of compulsory education are presented, it says, "Compulsory education aims at the development of the

intellectual, creative and physical abilities of the pupils, and the transmission to them of the basic elements of culture and civic education."

Based on these general goals, civic education aims at the preparation of future citizens to be able to practice civic responsibilities and to successfully confront future challenges, while actively participating in social life. In order to realize this goal, the curriculum of civic education develops knowledge, values, and the necessary skills to practice democratic citizenship.

### 1. Knowledge

Knowledge means facts, concepts, and generalizations which are considered necessary for citizens to have in order to actively and effectively participate in the democratic processes. These facts, concepts, and generalizations constitute the base upon which needed values and skills, including participation skills, are built. It is assumed that the deeper the citizens' knowledge of society is, the higher the possibility for their success as citizens will be.

In the process of learning about society, students and teachers resort to information from different sources such as their personal experiences, the community, mass media, libraries, and others. It is important to teach the pupils how to distinguish between fact and opinion and how to evaluate knowledge in terms of its authenticity. It is also important to remember that in citizenship education knowledge is a tool. The pupils must know the facts and concepts necessary for participation in the affairs and the life of society. At

the same time, knowledge must be chosen taking into consideration the age of the pupils and their personal experiences.

In addition to the facts, concepts, and generalizations, significant problems and issues in society are also basic elements of knowledge for the curriculum. If children are to be called upon some day to deal with these problems and issues, they need to know about them. However, these problems and issues must be chosen carefully so that the most enduring ones are included.

Knowledge in civic education is usually arranged around certain themes and topics as follows:

a. Types of communities -- starting with the family and continuing with the school, the local community, the nation, and the world; changes in the communities; the role of rule or law in the community; and balancing personal needs with those of society.

b. The interaction of citizens in a democratic society -- the nature of collaboration and competition among persons and groups, the concepts of equality and diversity among persons and groups, the nature of communities and their interdependence.

c. The rights, duties and responsibilities of citizens -- the importance of rules and laws in society, the duties and responsibilities of citizens, civil rights, honesty, justice, and moral responsibility.

d. Democracy in action -- The Albanian political system; the role of labor unions, non-governmental organizations, and other social groups; and the different types of government (democracy, dictatorship, monarchy, etc.)

e. The citizen as a producer and a consumer -- The main features of a market economy such as supply and demand, money, the role of the state in the economy, and the role of the citizen.

f. Professions, employment, and leisure time -- The values of health, job, and leisure time for each person and the society; kinds of professions in industry, business, agriculture, and the service sector; and how to choose a profession.

g. Public service -- Dependence on services paid through taxes; the difference between private, public, and voluntary services; changes in public services; and basic features of public service at the local and national levels.

h. The citizen and the environment -- The individual, his/her health, and the environment; ecological problems; energy sources and how they are exploited; the role of the citizen in the protection of the environment.

## 2. Values

Society cannot exist without a common core of values. With limited exceptions, the values of a democratic system are not absolute and unchangeable. People at a certain time and place can review their importance, and, through consensus, modify them or totally reject them in favor of new ones. The values that cannot be changed are the sovereignty of the people and human rights. Democracy is not conceivable without human rights and the power of the people to monitor and control the government.

As it was already alluded to in the preceding chapter, values are inner convictions that direct a person's behavior. Along with

knowledge, values assist the individual to deal with dilemmas and make decisions. The more conscious people are of their values, the more there is a possibility for them to control their behavior and make sound decisions. Values should be learned rationally. Acceptance of values in such a way involves judgment and leads to stronger and more devoted citizens. Traditionally values were developed through the family and other institutions in society, but in view of the recent past in Albania, there is no assurance that the democratic values will be developed through these institutions. The school must become involved if democracy is to be fully established. It is not necessary that values be treated separately in the curriculum. They can be taught in connection with the various problems of democracy as they are studied in school.

The most important of the democratic values were briefly presented in the previous chapter. They include individual or human rights, the common good, justice, equality, diversity, truth, and patriotism. The development of these values in children and youth is considered among the most important of the objectives of democratic citizenship education. Though brief general descriptions of the seven values were provided, they are again described here, probably with new dimensions. In addition, each description ends with the deliniation of specific instructional objectives for each value as follows:

a. Individual or human rights. Democracy is built on the idea that citizens have some rights which are, in a way, natural; they are not given by the government. The government, however, has the responsibility to protect these rights. They are: the right to life; the

right to pursue happiness; personal freedom; religious freedom; political freedom; freedom of speech; economic freedom; freedom of movement; the right of property; freedom of assembly; and the right to due process. Citizens need to be aware of these rights and to know about the responsibilities of the government to protect them.

Citizens must start early in their lives studying about them by being exposed to the main documents of human rights and by being provided with opportunities to identify and analyze events and problems that have to do with human rights.

b. The common good. The common good consists of whatever joint benefits all persons and groups in a community enjoy. However, in order for the common good to be valid, all people in society must be given the opportunity to participate in defining it. Quite often the common good is in conflict with individual or small group values and interests. In such cases, the common good is considered more important than the values and interests of specific individuals and groups within the community. The common good insures the welfare of all persons and groups.

Definitions of the common good are often in legislative documents such as laws for human rights and the defense of one's own country and the environment. Such documents must be studied in order to render the pupils able to understand and explain the idea of the common good and to make sound decisions when they are faced with a conflict between their own interests and values and those related to the well-being of the community.

c. Justice. Justice is another basic value in a democratic system that should be treated at length in the subject of civic education. A

simple definition of justice is being fair to all who live in a society. In a just society, freedom is not restricted and arrangements are made so that people can aspire to any position they wish and can secure for themselves a decent way of living. Corrective mechanisms exist to undo injustice whenever and wherever it occurs, including the government.

Pupils should be taught to recognize in real life justice and be able to tell the difference between just and unjust behavior when they see it in politics or any other aspect of life.

d. Equality. Equality is viewed in two different ways: as a belief that all people were created equal, and as a condition whereby all people are equal before the law and have equal opportunity in political, social, and economic matters. The study of equality as a value aims at rendering students able to explain the concept of equality in its different forms, and to analyze its application in different aspects of political, economic, and social life.

e. Diversity. In a society such as the Albanian society in which mobility and change are prevalent, diversity is a reality that cannot be ignored. For example, a number of ethnic groups and religions exist in Albania. In a democracy, diversity is accepted and valued. On the other hand, diversity poses some challenges which manifest themselves in the political, economic and social arenas. Citizens must be prepared to cope with these challenges. To do so, they must learn as early as possible to explain the concept of diversity, to recognize the problems presented by it, such as language problems in the case of minorities, and to analyze and evaluate situations where diversity generates contradictions and conflicts.

f. The truth. In a society where it is essential for citizens to be informed, the challenge of authentic information is very critical. The truth is a basic value in a democracy. In a democratic constitutional system, the citizen is obligated not only to tell the truth, but also to see to it that those in government tell the truth, as well, on political and social problems. Truth builds trust and credibility.

In considering truth, pupils must learn how to explain the concept of the truth and show its importance in a democratic society. They must understand the dilemmas associated with telling the truth when it conflicts with certain special interests and values. The students also explore the consequences of public indifference in cases where the truth is violated.

g. Patriotism. Patriotism is love and devotion for one's country and the reasons for which this is important. Patriotism is a value that unites the individuals in a society, and it is different from nationalism. Patriotic citizens are jealous of their freedom, and they are guided in their actions by the common good. It is their duty to be critical of the government if it deviates from the cause of individual freedom and from serving the common good.

As students study patriotism, they learn various dimensions of the concept and how to distinguish patriotism and nationalism, which at times can be destructive. Students learn how to resolve conflicts which arise in cases when patriotism conflicts with other basic values and interests, as, for example, the conflict between different religious views and the national interests.

### **3. Skills**

Skills are another important element of the objectives of civic education. There are intellectual skills, as well as social skills, including those of participation. Skills involve the application of knowledge in thinking about all aspects of civic life and the ability to effectively apply the values and principles of democracy in everyday life.

a. Intellectual skills. The intellectual skills enable the pupils to perceive, describe, explain, analyze, and evaluate information. They empower them to argue positions and make decisions. Using the intellectual skills, students can comprehend ideas or concepts such as patriotism, majority rule, and the protection of minorities. They can compare and contrast civil society and the state. They can classify information and distinguish between democratic constitutional attributes, and those associated with totalitarianism and other systems of government. Students can explain how an election system or a certain economic system works. They can analyze political situations and find ways through which they influence politics. They can clarify the difference between individual and public responsibilities and demonstrate how individual responsibilities enhance public life. They can discover weak points in proposed legislation and then argue against it.

b. Participation skills. Skills of participation render the pupils capable of effecting public and civic life. They assist them to work with the others in order to arrive at common interests and resolution of conflicts through compromise. Social participation requires interaction and collaboration in gathering information and in

exchanging opinions for the formulation of plans for action. It requires that a person know how to listen carefully and take his/her turn when speaking.

Participation also requires that citizens possess such practical skills as how to reach public officials, public services, and other civic and governmental organizations and agencies. They call for students to know how to influence politicians, how to vote, how to file a petition, how to testify in front of the public, and how to join public organizations, such as local associations and political groups.

In addition, social participation requires a willingness on the part of the citizens to actively participate in community affairs. This is known as political efficacy.

The best way to develop political efficacy and the social skills needed by a citizen is through practice in the life of the school, the family, and the community. Dealing with the problems of the family, the school, the local community, the state, the nation, and the world in the classroom is a very important aspect of civic education.

Also, pupils organize and take part in student government, and under the direction of the teacher, they monitor the work of institutions and the various political processes and policies. They take part in school elections, they join sport and artistic clubs, or an environmental association. The students must be motivated to participate in these activities; it should not be compulsory.

Based on the objectives described, the school in a democratic society develops responsible and competent participating citizens who are:

- Supportive of democratic values with emphasis on individual freedom and the common good.
- Supportive of the notion that decisions must be based on sound knowledge. Meaningful participation cannot take place with superficial knowledge. Sound knowledge is achieved through study and through experiences. Students integrate whatever knowledge they gain with their own experiences and whatever prior knowledge they have.
- Reflective. All persons have difficult problems in their lives that need to be solved. Civic education must prepare future citizens to reflect on such problems, consider alternative solutions, choose one that is supported by knowledge and is consistent with their values, and carry it out.
- Committed. This is another attribute of a successful participating citizen. The individual is committed to the principles of democracy, and is doing his/her best in participating in the affairs of society. To develop such commitment in children, the school exposes them to the lives of individuals who in the past demonstrated high commitment in the life of the community, brings them in touch with well-known citizens in the community and in various non-governmental organizations, involves them in service activities in the community -- such as helping in

hospitals, with environmental problems, and people in need, and provides them with opportunities to issue a school newspaper, to organize and operate a project such as recycling waste, to organize a meeting or a debate against pollution or to stage an information campaign on public matters.

## C. The Curriculum of Democratic Citizenship Education

### 1. Basic principles

In order to accomplish the objectives of civic education, the curriculum must have the following basic characteristics:

a. It must be student centered. Civic education must help students to understand social problems correctly and to see how these problems affect their lives. It must also help them to dedicate themselves to the democratic values of the community. The curriculum must serve all the pupils, responding to their cultural differences, their racial, ethnic and sexual identity and to the various styles of learning. Its design must take into consideration the Albanian context with which the students have some familiarity. This should by no means be used, however, as a reason to avoid dealing with nearby countries and the world in general. The world is small and what are considered to be world problems are really problems that affect everyone, regardless of where they live.

b. It must be taught through direct experiences within the environment in which the pupils live. That is why the students must

study the local community, the Albanian cultural reality, and the role every Albanian citizen plays in their democratic society. Concepts and generalizations must be illustrated with examples from the life of citizens and the way the government works. Basic values and skills should be developed through the study of and involvement in the community -- its laws and the social institutions which serve the people on a daily basis. Also, these values and skills can be developed through the students' examination, to the extent possible, of the local public issues and public debates associated with them. The curriculum should incorporate the needs of the community and encourage pupils to make whatever contribution they can in meeting those needs. Noted citizens, who have contributed to desirable changes in the community and the society in general, should be used as role models for the development of a feeling that each individual can make a difference.

c. The development of skills must take place in an integrated and natural way. The curriculum is not compartmentalized where the students develop the various types of objectives separately. The curriculum is dynamic in that it deals with basic themes and issues of the community and involves the students in the application of their knowledge, values, and skills in meaningful ways. The curriculum leads to action. Knowledge is not an aim itself, but a means to help the pupils, as members of society, to undertake activities for the improvement of the society as well as their own role in it.

In summary, the dynamic civic education curriculum assists the students to:

- Become acquainted with the features of a democratic society, including the principles on the basis of which it functions;
- Clearly understand the difference between norms and laws;
- Understand the way the state is organized and the meaning of the division of powers in government;
- Know what the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary branches of government are doing;
- Accept the importance of the individual in society, and the fact that, more or less, every society is characterized by diversity;
- Become capable for taking active part in the political, social, and economic life of a society;
- Understand and accept changes, and be able to adopt to those changes;
- Understand the relationship between individuals, groups and nations and the role each one of them plays in an interdependent world like ours;
- Develop the abilities of critical thinking;
- Master the expressive means of communication;
- Feel a sense of responsibility and that they can make a difference;
- Become capable of making sound decisions and solving conflicts peacefully and through the application of reason.

## 2. The content of the current Albanian curriculum

As any curriculum, the current Albanian curriculum consists of the formally organized overt curriculum and the informal hidden curriculum.

a. The formal curriculum. Civic education is presented as a separate subject from the first to the tenth grade of education and is divided into three cycles. During the first cycle, from the first through the fourth grade, the students learn about human relations one hour per week. The aim of this subject is to provide the pupils with the necessary knowledge and abilities to participate in the social processes. It also helps them to develop the values and beliefs which characterize the citizens in a democratic society as they deal with each other.

The content of the first cycle is organized around the following themes:

- The children in the family;
- The children at school;
- The children in society;
- Communication and the various means of communication;
- Health and public environments.

During the second cycle, from the fifth to the eighth grade, the students are involved with civic education one hour per week and they deal with the more formal aspects of an organized community. The aim of the curriculum at this level is to prepare the students as future citizens. The content deals with the social, political, judicial, and economic concepts of society. It aims at equipping the pupils with the necessary knowledge, abilities, and values to actively

participate in the more formal and institutionalized aspects of the life of a democratic society.

The content is organized around the following themes:

- Nature and role of the community
- The rights, duties and responsibilities of the citizens
- Relations between the individual and the state
- The citizen and the law
- Producers and consumers

During the third cycle of the curriculum, the emphasis is on a more systematic knowledge of society from a sociological point of view. At this level, grades nine and ten, the subject is taught two hours per week. The aim is to equip the pupils with the necessary knowledge to understand in depth the various aspects of social life and how to relate with these aspects without compromising their freedoms and their rights as citizens in a democratic society.

The content is organized around the following themes:

- Family
- Culture
- Science and technology in the information society
- Social, political and governmental organization of society
- Labor and society
- Deviant behaviors in society
- People and the environment
- Albania in international relations

b. The informal curriculum. The above is the formal curriculum of civic education. However, the objectives of civic education cannot be realized only through the formal curriculum.

Civic education is influenced by a number of other factors which constitute the informal hidden curriculum of civic education. The school must be aware and systematically take advantage of the hidden curriculum, if it is to succeed in developing the future citizens. The hidden curriculum includes:

- The correlation between the various subjects. Many elements of civic education are treated in other subjects of the school curriculum. Some of them, such as history and geography, are very important for the development of values and convictions and for the study of relations between the individual and society. In history and geography, for instance, the students can find many examples with which to understand rights and responsibilities and the inevitability of change and development in time and space. Social sciences in general provide the wider context within which civic education fits. Literature, the arts, natural sciences and technology are also providing many opportunities for the development of citizens.
- School atmosphere. The way school life is organized and directed has great influence on how well students achieve the objectives of civic education. At school, where close relations exist between the teacher and the pupils, where the pupils are listened to and take part in decision making, where mutual respect and tolerance are characteristics of the human relations, where responsibilities on the part of the pupils are encouraged, where interactive teaching

methods are used, and where relations with the community exist, there is an ideal environment for the development of civic education objectives.

- Out-of-school activities. The out-of-school environment provides the pupils with numerous opportunities to enrich their ability to express themselves, to exercise their civic responsibilities, and to implement the knowledge gained in the classroom. One such opportunity is the involvement of the students in the problems of the community. Civic education allows for the treatment and discussion of community problems, some of which might be closely related with the lives of the students. It goes without saying that problems have different solutions depending on the political, economic, and social circumstances of those directly connected with the various problems. The pupils must be given enough information to analyze the proposed solutions and to understand why people see things differently. It is important for them to realize that people have the right to express whatever views they have in regards to a particular problem. Depending on their developmental level, students should carry certain problems to a solution or solutions using the process of compromise and consensus. When more than one solutions emerge, the students must be respectful of each other's points of view.

## D. Methods of Teaching Democratic Citizenship

In a democratic society where the government serves the people and the people have the responsibility to monitor the government, the way people are educated to carry out this responsibility is of paramount importance. The traditional approach to education was characterized by transmitting a high level of knowledge without the skills to implement it. That is not enough. Application of knowledge is important and educators recommend the use of the problem solving method for teaching the skills associated with the application of knowledge.

The following are the classical steps of the problem solving method:

- Presentation of the problem,
- Collection of relevant information,
- Formulation of hypothesis or hypotheses,
- Testing of hypothesis or hypotheses, and
- Reaching conclusions.

Variations of the problem solving method are used in democratic citizenship education to deal with the resolution of conflict and social problems. As explained below, these variations go beyond the intellectualization involved in problem solving and are known as conflict resolution and decision making.

### 1. Conflict resolution.

The word conflict, as it is used here, means a disagreement regarding the solution of a particular social problem. Quite often

people disagree on what is the best solution. As a result, a critical consideration of all possible alternative solutions is required.

Usually, knowledge is not enough to resolve a social problem, and people resort to their values in order to arrive at a solution. Conflict resolution tends to link the students' knowledge with their values. As pointed out earlier, values are inner motivating forces that influence one's behavior.

Children are constantly involved in conflict in their everyday lives. Tomorrow as adult citizens they will be called upon to participate in the resolution of various social problems. It is important, therefore, that they be able to resolve conflicts.

It was stated earlier that knowledge might not be enough to resolve a particular conflict, but knowledge must be taken into consideration to its fullest prior to resorting to values. Resolving conflicts without the careful consideration of knowledge means resolving them impulsively, something that should be avoided. Reason must always prevail.

In order for conflict resolution to be rational, a number of steps must be implemented as follows:

a. Conflict presentation. The conflict must first be made clear to the students in the form of a question that can lead to action. For example, there are family members who are violent toward the rest of the family. The question would be: What can be done to reduce or even totally eliminate family violence?

b. Collection of related information, including values related to the particular conflict or social problem. The above posed problem leads students to think and learn a number of related concepts and

situations. For example, they learn about the concept of family, what is violence, what are its effects, what are some of the gender roles in a family situation, and what is the nature of the relationships between the parents and the children. Probably the students have some prior information, but the teacher makes sure the students acquire whatever additional information they need to fully understand the problem.

The teacher also notices the various positions, depending on their values, the children express at the beginning of the discussion of the problem. There might be children who believe that it is morally just to exert violence to win power. Others might believe that the rest of the family should obey someone in power, probably the one who makes the largest economic contribution, even though this may sometimes lead to violence. There might be others in the classroom who do not justify violence under any circumstances.

Students need the information in order to proceed with their reasoning on the situation. Otherwise, they will be led by feelings, emotions, and limited personal experience to an impulsive resolution of whatever conflict they face.

c. Consideration of all possible solutions to the conflict. As pointed out earlier, the children respond to a conflict on the basis of the information available to them, but also according to the values they bring to the classroom. Sometimes they are aware of their values while other times they are not. This step will assist the student not only to express their values, but to evaluate them, as well, on the basis of the information gathered and the values expressed by the other students.

The teacher asks the students to suggest their own individual solutions and write them on the blackboard. The teacher also asks the students to supply justifications for the solutions they propose. This is an important step since the students are expected to make sure their justifications make sense.

d. Consideration of the consequences of each solution. The teacher should not end the lesson with the traditional moralizing: "So dear students, no one, for no reason, should be violent in the family." By doing so, the teacher resolves the problem at hand on the basis of his/her own values. If the students are to grow in their ability to resolve conflict, they must be led to the next step of conflict resolution, which is the consideration of the consequences of each solution. The teacher makes sure that both positive and negative consequences are stated. It is not necessary that the student who proposed a particular solution also state the consequences for that solution. The whole class must participate. As a matter of fact, the student who proposed a particular solution might have only positive consequences to suggest, but others may come up with negative consequences.

The solution and their consequences are exhibited in the classroom and the student have an opportunity to study them. It is in this step that they may recognize the strengths or weaknesses of their positions.

e. Deciding on a solution or solutions. Based on the realizations arrived at through the consideration of the various solutions and their consequences, the students may modify their positions and come up with a solution upon which they all agree. It is possible that

the student may not agree on one solution, but research shows that the process of conflict resolution leads to fewer solutions than proposed prior to the implementation of the process. If the information and reasoning cannot lead to one solution, the teacher should not demand it. At this stage, the process is more important than the actual solution itself.

f. Action. This step is what makes this method different from problem solving. It requires that a solution be implemented through action arrived at by consensus. For example, students considering the problem of violence in the family may take concrete action during their leisure time to reduce or to prevent violence in their own family. In other situations, they may decide to act collectively. They organize, plan, and act according to the plans. A couple of examples of action could be cleaning a park, or writing letters on an issue to the press or to authorities in the community.

g. Assessment of the results. This step follows action and assesses its results. Based on this assessment, the students, under the guidance of the teacher, decide whether their plans were effective or whether they should modify them to make them more effective.

## 2. Decision making

Decision making is basically the method of conflict resolution. It starts with a situation that requires a solution, but the decision may or may not require the application of values. Knowledge may be enough to find the solution. Conflict resolution always involves values.

### 3. Effective teaching strategies

In addition to the methods of conflict resolution and decision making, there are some teaching strategies that can be effective in the achievement of democratic citizenship objectives. Included among them are those based on the principles of cooperative learning, approaches that help students to carry out research individually or in groups, role playing, simulations, and the involvement of students in practical activities in the community.

Effectiveness of civic education depends largely on the types of teaching methods and strategies used, but also on the classroom climate. Children build and keep a functioning democratic structure in the classroom and this is considered to be fundamental in preparing future citizens.

Following is a brief description of several teaching strategies, some of which often play a key role within the context of conflict resolution and decision making:

a. Group-inquiry. The group inquiry strategy rests on the assumption that students are members of society and as such they have to cooperate, relate with others, and rely on them. As they live in society, they can never escape the human relations aspect of life. Children and youth are always in search of independence, dignity, and autonomy, but they also feel the need to find ways to solve conflicts arising from their relationships with others. Working in groups students have the opportunity to gain theoretical knowledge and practical skills, both of them equally important in participating in the everyday social and political life of society. Continuous use of

the group inquiry method in the classroom engages the students in the process of resolving societal problems.

A number of procedures are involved in the group-inquiry method. As any research, it has a starting point. Student research starts when they face a problematic situation that stimulates their thinking, makes them react, and leads them to the understanding that if they solve the problem their lives will be affected for the better. If students reach this point, it is easier for them to explore and identify the problem, look for solutions, implement those solutions, and evaluate the results. Working in a group makes students go through all of these stages naturally. As they do that, reading, observation and consulting with the teacher or others are necessary.

Group-inquiry calls for a skillful and motivated teacher. In order to effectively monitor the students' learning, the teacher has to ask him/herself: Are the students dealing with the problem at hand? Are they gaining knowledge? Are they coming closer with each other while working in the group? Are they developing group-work skills? Is learning fun or boring for them?

Group-inquiry gives an opportunity for the students to deal with knowledge, values, and skills objectives at the same time in a natural way. The students gather information, classify it, put it together with old information, form and test different hypotheses, reach conclusions, develop generalizations, consider possible consequences, and develop various action plans. This process involves knowledge and numerous skills, but both of them might not be sufficient to solve a particular problem. As already stated, the

students might have to resort to their own values, and this requires the development of special skills.

Among the most important skills related to values are the ability to express one's feeling concerning a particular situation, and to listen and tolerate the feelings of others in the group. The reader is reminded that when knowledge is not enough to solve a problem, people usually resort to their values, but the values might not be clear. In such cases, it is important for one to express his/her values and evaluate them on the basis of information available. It is also important that one's values be compared with the values of others. This should not be done through a public debate, but each student should be given the opportunity and be encouraged to do it on his or her own.

In summary, group-inquiry cultivates respect for human dignity and helps the students to acquire independence of thinking and to become more committed to research work. At the same time, it helps students sympathize with one another and develop warm relationships among themselves. Student develop the necessary skills to carry out research and to practice in group decision making.

b. Roleplay. The essence of role playing is putting children at school in real life situations and assigning them with the responsibility to solve problems. It aims at helping them understand the realm of human relations and solve problems on their own. Through the use of this method, children learn to analyze social situations and solve social conflicts in a democratic way. They understand that it is their value system that urges them to resort to and accept certain solutions. Through roleplay, students develop

new skills, attitudes and values, and learn how to look at problems from different points of view. Role playing brings the real life situations in the classroom, makes students reason "here and now", gives them the chance to see how values influence their behavior, and teaches them how to listen to and respect each other.

The main steps to be followed in roleplay are:

- Preparation. During this phase, the teacher poses a problem to the students and helps them to clarify it. He or she explains the content of the roles to be played, assigns the roles to the children, and helps them to understand these roles. The teacher makes sure current significant problems and situations are played out. The children should be encouraged to play the roles of the president of the country, the various ministers, and various internationally known personalities.
- Play. The students are provided with adequate flexibility to play the assigned roles. The teacher may influence the role playing by providing suggestions or encouraging the students to stay as close to reality as possible. Stressing authenticity assists students to learn.
- Evaluation. The teacher together with the students judge the playing of roles by the various students. The same roles may be played by more than one student. This allows the class to compare performances and interpretations of roles.
- Discussion on the implications of roleplay. The teacher helps the students to relate the role playing experiences with real situations in everyday life. The teacher must make sure to accept positively all of the students' attitudes, reactions and

responses. He/she must assess positively all of their opinions and feelings. The teacher's duty is to guide only. In no way is he/she to dictate how students play and react. The teacher is there to help students express their own individuality.

In summary, roleplay helps the students to analyze personal values and behaviors, to solve real-life problems, to develop good relations among themselves, and to develop the necessary skills of information gathering and value analysis. It also helps students to become independent and daring in freely expressing their own thoughts and opinions.

#### E. Teacher Education: Needs and Prospects

Many changes have taken place in Albania during the last five years. The laws, the government, and all other institutions and the way they function, have completely changed. The way the people think, however, cannot change so quickly. They need help, but the process of helping people to think differently is a difficult one. In this context, teachers have a significant role to play. They are in the position to serve as the accelerating force for the establishment and promotion of democracy. If properly prepared, teachers can serve as vivid examples of the new way of thinking, living, and acting.

Proper preparation calls for the teachers to be masters of the main concepts of democracy and the democratic processes. They must have strong intellectual and social skills, including participation skills, that would allow them to play a leading role in the newly

established democratic society. They must be committed to the democratic values and the respect for freedom and responsibility which they reflect.

In order to raise to the level of a democratic teacher, all Albanian teachers must take a well-thought out course in educational theory and practice. They must learn to think independently and to reflect on what they read and observe. They must learn to practice the basic elements of the democratic process -- dialogue and compromise. The conduct of the teacher in this course must reflect the characteristics of a democratic society. Teachers should respect each other, civilly dialogue with each other, compromise on differences, and peacefully resolve arising conflicts. These are the behaviors they would be expected to develop in students.

Changes in the programs of teacher education institutions are also imperative. In the first place, the context provided by the institution of higher education must change dramatically. It must allow teacher education units to function independently and to be responsible for the structural changes to be initiated. A continuous intellectual debate is an indispensable condition for the creation and evaluation of new structures and programs. The methods used in the teacher education institutions must reflect democratic skills, values and processes. Teaching about teaching, and learning about learning should be, in essence, reflective.

The teacher education curriculum has been reformed recently in ways that are consistent with the overall changes in the Albanian society. All students in teacher education must gain information on

such concepts as citizenship and the law, and in such fields as history, geography, philosophy, sociology, psychology and pedagogy.

The way the teachers are assessed during their preparation is under consideration for possible reform. People usually assess and evaluate the work of others in the way they themselves were assessed by others.

Another change in teacher education is evident in the partnerships between institutions of teacher education and the schools. This practice will enable teacher education students to implement some of the methods they learn in theory prior to graduating.

Democratic citizenship education and teacher education are closely linked with each other. The desired behaviors for future democratic citizens highly condition the way the teachers must be prepared. Teacher educators need to be thinking about the knowledge, values, skills, duties, rights, and responsibilities future citizens in a democratic Albania must have, if they wish to properly reform teacher education to serve the causes of democracy.

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